

Trump orders police-military takeover of Washington D.C.

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11 August 2025

In his most brazen action yet to create a fascistic dictatorship in America, President Donald Trump declared a state of emergency in the District of Columbia (D.C.), putting the Metropolitan Police Department under federal control, and mobilized nearly a thousand soldiers in the D.C. National Guard to patrol the city. On the pretext of a “crime wave” in the city, Trump’s latest big lie, he is putting the US capital under military rule.

Monday morning Trump signed an executive order putting Attorney General Pam Bondi in charge of the D.C. police. She in turn named Terry Cole, head of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), a unit of the federal Department of Justice (DOJ), to be the day-to-day commander. Trump also signed an executive memorandum authorizing Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to mobilize 800 National Guardsmen, with Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll, a former Army Ranger and Iraq war veteran, in charge of those troops.

For an initial 30 days and likely far longer, the capital city of a supposed democracy, with a huge working class population, will be under the equivalent of martial law. Instead of a constitutional separation of powers, with “checks and balances,” the Congress, the Supreme Court and every other government institution will become part of the personal fiefdom of Trump, a political gangster who openly seeks the violent suppression of all opposition to his rule.

This action sends a political signal not only to the entire United States, but to the world. The country which long boasted of its role as the first democratic republic is now ruled by a would-be dictator, who is seeking a violent confrontation with his political opponents and, above all, with the working class. Trump’s fascist allies on every continent will be emboldened. The workers of the world must be forewarned and prepare politically in accordance with the dimensions of the threat.

Trump announced the federal takeover of Washington in the course of a 90-minute press conference, which combined fascistic rants and endless self-praise from the president and nauseating flattery from his minions. These included Bondi, Hegseth, FBI Director Kash Patel and US Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro, all experienced bootlickers of Trump from their years at Fox News.

In one particularly ominous remark, Trump said that Hegseth would contact state governors about providing troops from their National Guard forces if this was necessary to enforce emergency rule in Washington. He also hinted that combat military personnel

might be deployed in the capital as well, citing the model of Los Angeles, where 500 heavily armed US Marines were stationed in support of widespread raids to round up immigrant workers for deportation.

Trump delivered an obscenity-laden rant to justify the military-police mobilization, declaring, “Our capital city has been overtaken by violent gangs and bloodthirsty criminals, roving mobs of wild youth, maniacs and homeless people.... We’re getting rid of the slums where they live.” He vilified the homeless repeatedly, calling them “very dirty,” threatening they would all be driven out of the city to unspecified locations and declaring, “They’ll not be allowed to turn our capital into a wasteland for the world to see.”

No American president has ever used such language to describe the population of this country. Trump’s words express more than the racial bigotry and hatred of the working class imbibed in the course of his rise through the nether worlds of Manhattan real estate, casino gambling, reality television and other corporate swindles. He is steeped in the world view of Adolf Hitler, his favorite author, whose speeches were a regular feature of his bedside table, according to his first wife Ivana.

In Nazi Germany, homeless people were categorized as “asocials” and targeted for persecution. The Nazis considered them unproductive members of society and a burden on the state, at odds with their drive for racial purity and social regimentation. In America, immigrants, Muslims and other minorities join the Jews in the demonology of fascism. But the methods are the same: combining fanatical hatred of socialism and Marxism, racist scapegoating to disguise the fundamental class divisions in society, and increasingly open violence against all social and political opposition.

Trump wants an America that will be comfortable for the super-rich and the most affluent sections of the middle class, made possible through brutal class oppression carried out against the working class, while society is “cleaned” of the most visible victims of that class war.

Washington D.C. is the third major mobilization of military force within the United States this year: first at the US-Mexico border, then in Los Angeles, now in the nation’s capital. And it is not to be the last. Trump and other officials emphasized at the White House press conference that similar measures were planned for Chicago, New York and other US cities.

Trump is making use of the peculiar legal status of the District of

Columbia, a federal territory with limited self-rule and no voting representation in Congress, as a screen for his imposition of dictatorship. Under the 1973 D.C. Home Rule Act, the president has the authority to take control of the Washington police for up to 30 days, after which Congress must vote on any continuation. But there is no such limit on the use of National Guard troops, whether drawn from the population of the District or from other states, or on the use of the regular military forces.

Trump's latest executive orders follow a carefully worked-out plan. An internal memo from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), obtained by the *New Republic* and made public in its August 2 issue, details the effort to normalize the use of federal troops within the United States. Authored by Philip Hegseth, the younger brother of the defense secretary and a senior adviser to DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, "It suggests that DHS is anticipating many more uses of the military in urban centers, noting that L.A.-style operations may be needed 'for years to come.'"

According to the magazine, a July 21 meeting between DHS and Pentagon officials discussed coordinated action in "defense of the homeland." Those attending included Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Gregory Guillot, commander of NORTHCOM, which controls US military forces operating across North America.

What is most remarkable about the present situation is that Trump is carrying out the step-by-step erection of a fascist dictatorship in plain view, in real time, without any resistance from the institutions and organizations that supposedly uphold the principles of constitutional democracy.

The Democratic Party has done nothing to oppose Trump's dictatorship. Congressional Democrats issued only the most perfunctory statements against Trump's takeover of the US capital—where Trump won only 6.5 percent of the vote in November 2024. Local officials like Mayor Muriel Bowser confined themselves to complaining that Trump was distorting the crime figures in the city and had not consulted with them before declaring the state of emergency.

The content of the Democratic Party critique was to claim that Trump's actions were a "diversion," an attempt to "change the subject" from the economic failures, social attacks and myriad scandals of his second term. They speak as though oblivious to the fact that their own members of Congress will be going to work in offices patrolled by soldiers and police directed by Trump, the same president who on January 6, 2021 dispatched armed rioters to attack the Capitol.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and other Senate Democrats have proposed a response that includes blocking Republican legislation, legal challenges—which means accepting as the ultimate authority the Supreme Court packed with fascists, one-third of them chosen by Trump—and speeches at committee hearings and public protests. In other words, they will wring their hands impotently as American democracy is systematically destroyed.

When the roles were reversed, and Democratic President Joe Biden held office with narrow Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, the Republican minority was able to block any significant measures to alleviate the deepening social crisis. The

Democrats had only one priority they were willing to fight for: instigating, continuing and escalating the US-NATO war with Russia in Ukraine.

With a Republican in the White House and equally narrow Republican majorities in the House and Senate, Trump enacts his full program with impunity. He has pushed massive tax cuts for the wealthy through Congress, paid for in part by \$1 trillion in social cuts, while issuing an unprecedented battery of executive orders to lock up immigrants, fire federal workers and destroy social programs like education, healthcare and environmental protection.

As for the unions, which still nominally enlist more than 14 million workers, their leaders will not lift a finger. In the early days of the labor movement, one of the functions of unions was to defend the democratic rights of their members, including their right to strike, to organize independently of the bosses and to oppose police-military attacks. The unions of today are incapable of any such action, having been transformed into paid instruments of corporate management, an industrial police force in all but name.

While the Democrats and the unions run and hide (or seek to accommodate the aspiring dictator), the working class is on a collision course with the Trump administration. The provocations by ICE thugs in Los Angeles and other cities have already provoked a hostile response. The escalating attacks on democratic rights, public services and workers' living standards make a political explosion inevitable. The fascist in the White House senses this, hence his uncontrollable outbursts denouncing socialism and "the left."

The Socialist Equality Party warns that the working class cannot rely on any of the worm-eaten institutions of American capitalism. Workers must prepare well-organized industrial action to oppose Trump's dictatorial measures. This means strike action in industry, transport and by government workers themselves. The first step in such a campaign is to establish rank-and-file committees in factories, warehouses, offices and other workplaces, independent of the existing corporate-controlled fake unions and the Democratic Party.

The defense of democratic rights requires the creation of a new political power, based on an anti-capitalist socialist program. This is bound up with the establishment of independent organizations of working class struggle and the building of a mass independent political movement of the working class. We call on all those who agree with the perspective to join the Socialist Equality Party and join the fight against dictatorship.



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